

I apologise for the late submission of this report.

I was appointed as a Non-executive Director on 19 May, after Sean Hewitt resigned his position on 3 April.

I met with Phil Ehr (Chief Executive), David Eustace (Director of Finance), Bob Kane (then a candidate to become Commercial Director) and Chris Fegan (Strategic Advisor) soon after appointment. During my period of office I've attended four Board meetings: two evening meetings by Skype and two all-day face-to-face meetings. I've received about 1,500 emails and sent 232.

Matters considered by the Board since late May include:

- The impact of the unofficial EC Forum and the formation of an official ECF Forum
- The appointment of Bob Kane as Commercial Director
- The request for an EGM to consider a proposal to reappoint Sean Hewitt to the Board
- Approval and publication of Board meetings minutes
- The formation of the Constitution and Governance Review Commission and, allied to this, sign-up to the Sport & Recreation Alliance's Code of Good Governance
- Complaints by Dr. Kadengal on behalf of his son
- Candidates for President; the role of President
- A request to join a complaint made by the Kenyan and Philippines chess federations to the FIDE Ethics Commission
- Rehousing the National Chess Library and moving the ECF Office
- Commercial ethics, Ray Keene and The Times
- FIDE Academies including an ECF complaint to FIDE, applications made by two UK organisations direct to FIDE and the ECF's own application
- Ray Keene's claimed invitation to visit the British Championships at Aberystwyth
- The English Seniors Championship – payment of prizes; whether the ECF got value for money for its £1,000 investment
- Support for women's chess
- Revision and reinstatement of both the Code of Conduct and the Complaints Procedure
- The organisation of junior chess and junior training

In my role as a Non-executive Director, I've attempted to provide constructive scrutiny of the Board's operation. I've asked questions to try to ensure the interests of all stakeholders are considered, so that balanced decisions are made.

Observations and concerns

As Julian Clissold highlights in his report, in many respects the ECF has had a good year: it had a successful British Championships in Aberystwyth, its finances are improved, participation in international junior events was fantastic.

I am pleased that the Complaints Procedure and Code of Conduct have both been revised and reinstated. I hope that the Constitution and Governance Review Commission will produce constructive recommendations which are adopted.

On a different tack...

All Board members are volunteers, living in different parts of the country. These are constraints on the operation of the Board and, in my view, the biggest problem the Board has is that it attempts to achieve more than it has capacity for. Consequently it makes decisions which are not properly thought out and this can cause further work and disharmony. The Board should be less ambitious and prune its workload. It should focus first on fundamentals – for example, approving and publishing the minutes of its meetings. It should try to avoid making decisions which are divisive or risk being so.

I was particularly concerned about the handling of three matters:

1. Implementation of the official ECF Forum. While it was agreed there should be a facility through which Directors would make announcements and respond to queries, no proposal for a (far wider-ranging) forum was put to the Board. Concerns expressed prior to implementation were ignored. There are different views on the purpose of the Forum: is it intended as a competitor to the unofficial EC Forum or not? Also: On appointment I was asked not to post on the EC Forum and told that all Directors had agreed not to do so. I wasn't especially happy about this and would, at least, have liked a statement to have been made to explain the silence.
2. Sponsorship negotiations with The Times and Sunday Times newspapers through Ray Keene. Given the circumstances in which he left the BCF and his subsequent activities I was shocked to discover Board members were in discussion with Mr. Keene over a sponsorship deal. The view of fellow Directors is that a deal would be justified so long as the benefits to the ECF outweigh any anticipated loss of reputation. I was told Mr. Keene would have no involvement in anything which might transpire.
3. The FIDE Election. This diverted attention from more important business back home. Further, the support provided to the Kasparov campaign went, in my view, beyond what was reasonable and had been agreed. Included in this is what seems to me to be propaganda* written by the Chief Executive and presented to the representatives of national chess federations in Tromsø. I was also concerned that, despite significant concerns expressed in a public statement, an application was made for the ECF to become a FIDE Academy – there are conflicting accounts on whether the application was mandated (and registration and annual membership fees are not trivial).

* A two-page diatribe against FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the gist of which is that the leaked Paulson-Ilyumzhinov proposal, on the ownership and operation of AGON, provides proof that Ilyumzhinov and his cronies were out to fleece FIDE. *It doesn't*. Of far greater significance is the FIDE-AGON agreement approved by the FIDE General Assembly (made up of the representatives of the national chess federations). This protects FIDE's interests since it provides for payments to be made to FIDE: an amount equal to 20 or 25% of the prize fund of each event organised by AGON; and, on a sliding scale, between 30 and 55% of adjusted gross sponsorship revenue received by AGON.